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ABSTRACT

The relationship of scores on a measure of moral reasoning to the perceived relative importance of statements of value that M. Rokeach (1973) conceptualized as being instrumental (states of being) or terminal (end states of existence) was studied with 66 undergraduate students. The pattern of relationships between the scores and the relative levels of importance assigned to the value statements were also studied for various subgroups. Moral reasoning was measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT) (J. Rest, 1993), and preference for human values was measured by the Rokeach Value Survey (1983). In the total sample of respondents, the level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT exhibited virtually no relationship to the expressed degree of preference for any Rokeach value statement, terminal or instrumental. In general, little if any relationship was evident across the 16 geographically defined subgroups between one's level of moral reasoning and the degree of importance one tended to place on terminal or instrumental value statements. The overall pattern supports the hypothesis that there would be no consistent patterns of relationships between the constructs of moral reasoning and human values. Appendixes present Rest's theory of moral behavior and L. Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. (Contains 2 tables and 16 references.) (SLD)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN VALUES AND MORAL REASONING AS COMPONENTS OF MORAL BEHAVIOR

By

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The Importance of Studying Moral Reasoning and Human Values

Both human values and moral reasoning have been researched in an attempt to understand human behavior; however, neither domain by itself provides a sufficient explanation of behavioral influences. In pursuit of this goal, researchers have attempted to find relationships between the two (Weber, 1993).

Feather (1988) suggested two reasons why a relationship between values and stages of moral reasoning might be expected: (a) theorists such as Kohlberg (1984) associate different values with different developmental stages of moral reasoning and (b) solutions to moral problems would be expected to be influenced by learning in past social situations, because both moral reasoning and preferences for values have been related to socialization experiences. Unfortunately, although consistent relationships between values and moral reasoning might be predicted, research has failed to produce consistent findings. Indeed, the results have been better distinguished by a nearly total inconsistency of findings. A handful of investigations has been concerned with this relationship. Although all but one have produced significant results, the findings have been, almost without exception, dissimilar (Feather, 1988; Glover, 1991; Lockley, 1976; McLellan, 1970; Parish, Rosenblatt, & Kappes, 1979-1980; Weber, 1993).

Moral Reasoning and Moral Behavior

Moral reasoning has been found to be statistically related to moral action, albeit inconsistently (Blasi, 1980). Varying degrees of empirical support for the correlation have existed for different areas of behavior. Higher stages of moral reasoning have been associated with the ability to resist pressure to conform in *judgment*, but not *behavior*. Only modest support has been found for a relationship between moral reasoning and altruism or honesty.

From a theoretical point of view, the inconsistency of relationship between moral behavior and moral cognition should not be surprising. In developing his method of assessment, Kohlberg (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) moved progressively away from content and toward thought structures as the basis for his developmental stages. In his theory, each stage is defined not by an action choice, but by the reasons given in support of the action. Opposite moral actions are allowed to coexist within the same developmentally defined stage (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). Theoretically, any stage of development would be compatible with any action choice possible within Kohlberg's moral dilemmas. Thus, it would seem that the ability to predict action from stage of reasoning would be expected to be low, given the stages as defined.

Human Values and Behavior

In contrast to these findings, human values have been shown to be correlated with numerous behaviors (e.g., Ball-Rokeach, 1984; Rokeach, 1973, 1979). Rokeach (1973) defined a value as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode or conduct or end state of existence" (p. 5). He further described values as "the main genotypes that underlie or determine social behavior" (p. 122).

Moral Reasoning and Values as Components of Moral Behavior

In response to the irregularity of findings concerning moral reasoning and behavior, Blasi (1980) suggested the need for greater emphasis on the "psychological nature of integrity or of personal consistency" (p. 40). He criticized the study of moral/cognitive structures in absence of their psychological environment. The current investigation represents an attempt to respond to

this critique and to bring an existing theoretical position to bear on the lack of consistency which has characterized research in the area of moral judgment, human values, and moral behavior. Through a theoretical integration, perhaps a new understanding of old findings may emerge.

Rest (Narvaez & Rest, 1995) has proposed a theory of moral behavior which may serve to explain and to integrate the discrepant findings previously indicated. According to Rest's theory, moral behavior is determined by the following four processes or components which are hypothesized to interact with one another: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and implementation (Narvaez & Rest, 1995). (See Appendix A for complete descriptions of components.)

In this view, moral judgment and human values are actually two separate processes which interact with personality dimensions in producing behavior. Whereas moral judgment (Component II) involves deciding between right and wrong acts, human values (Component III) constitute the motivation (or lack thereof) to carry out the chosen act. This model would predict that, as separate processes, values and moral reasoning each would exhibit a stronger relationship to moral behavior than to one another. This interpretation is consistent with past research findings.

Kohlberg's Three Levels and Six Stages of Moral Development.

Kohlberg (1958, 1984) has defined moral reasoning as being classifiable within three levels which are further divided into six stages of development. (See Appendix B for complete definitions of the stages.) All persons are said to progress through the stages in the same order, although the rate and end-point of development may vary. That is, some individuals may move through the stages more rapidly than others, and not every person proceeds through all stages.

Rokeach's Conceptualization of Human Values

Rokeach (1973) conceived of values as beliefs. He distinguished between existential/descriptive beliefs (which can be true or false), evaluative beliefs (the quality of whether a thing is bad or good), and prescriptive/proscriptive beliefs (which evaluate some means or end of action to be desirable or undesirable). Thus, when activated, values prescribe particular ways of behaving or end states of existence for the individual who holds them. Rokeach's work focused on the values people hold, rather than on the values objects are said to have, as human values may function as criteria for evaluations.

Rokeach (1973) divided values into two types: *instrumental* (which are concerned with modes of conduct) and *terminal* (which are concerned with end-states of existence). His types represent two distinct but interconnected systems. Generally, instrumental values are employed in the service of attaining terminal values.

Rokeach distinguished values from attitudes: values are single beliefs concerned with desirable ways of being or end-states of existence, whereas attitudes are several beliefs which are organized around a particular situation or object. In being more central to the personality, values may guide attitudes. Furthermore, values may be contrasted with personality traits. Rokeach (1973) proposed that an individual's character, viewed externally as a cluster of traits, may be reformulated from an internal view as a system of values. However, although traits are considered to be fixed, value systems allow greater flexibility for change.

Finally, Rokeach (1973) regarded values as standards which guide social, political, and religious behavior. He indicated that values influence ways in which individuals present themselves, evaluate themselves, compare themselves and others, and rationalize their

behavior to themselves when preserving their self-esteem.

Purpose of the Study

In conceptual terms, the central hypothesis of this study was that across several demographically defined subgroups within a total sample of undergraduate university students, there would be no consistent patterns of relationship between the two constructs of moral reasoning and human values. Moreover, it was anticipated that the findings in the current investigation would not replicate in a consistent way those found in other studies.

The twofold purpose of this study was to (a) determine for a total sample of 66 undergraduate university students the relationship of scores on a measure of moral reasoning to the perceived relative levels of importance of statements of value that Rokeach (1973) conceptualized as being instrumental (states of being) or terminal (end states of existence) and (b) ascertain for various subgroups classified in terms of certain demographic characteristics whether the pattern of relationships between the scores on the measure of moral reasoning and the perceived relative levels of importance assigned to the value statements were comparable to those for the total sample.

It is possible that the apparent relationships between human values and moral reasoning which were found in earlier investigations were in fact false, a function of spurious demographic variables instead of an indication of true relationships. If so, this circumstance would point toward the possibility that measures of moral judgments and of human values provide data suggesting their orthogonality, rather than a systematic relationship, as had been previously hypothesized. If differences in the patterns of relationship between human values and moral reasoning exist among demographically defined, then this may point to the possibility that human

values and moral reasoning are not related in any universal or necessary way. In this case, an argument may be made for the theoretical integration of value theory into the motivational domain of Rest's four component theory of moral behavior (Narvaez & Rest, 1995).

Research Question

In the present study, moral reasoning has been operationalized as performance on the Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1993). Human values has been operationalized as performance on the Rokeach Value Survey - Form G (Rokeach, 1983). Consistent with the purpose of this investigation, one central research question was posed as follows:

> For each of several subgroups from a total sample of 66 undergraduate university students which had been formed in terms of a specific demographic classification, what was the degree of relationship of scores on a test of moral reasoning developed by Rest (1993) to the rank orders of importance that members of each of these subgroups assigned to each of (a) 18 terminal value statements and (b) 18 instrumental value statements proposed by Rokeach (1983)?

Methods and Procedures

Total sample and subgroups. The total sample for this research study consisted of 66 undergraduate students in an ethics class with an emphasis upon personal development. From this total sample of students 16 different subgroups were formed in terms of the following demographic characteristics: (a) religious upbringing (21 Catholic and 24 Ptotestant students), (b) ethnicity or race (four subgroups: 8 African-American/Black, 12 Asian-American/Asian, 10 Hispanic/Latino /Chicano, and 33 White students), (c) gender (37 females and 29 males), (d) age (55 students aged 22 years or younger, and 11 students 24 years or older), (e) amount of

need-based financial aid for which individuals were eligible (34 students eligible for $8,000 or less of need-based financial aid, and 24 students eligible for $12,001 or more of need-based financial aid), (f) level of education of father (29 students whose fathers had achieved at least a baccaulaureate level of education, and 37 students whose fathers did not graduate from college), and (g) level of education of mother (27 students whose mothers had achieved at least a baccaulaureate level of education, and 37 students whose mothers did not graduate from college). Other smaller subgroups existed, however, analyses were conducted only for these listed subgroups which, in the judgment of the researcher, had frequencies high enough to permit meaningful statistical analyses.)

Measures. Moral reasoning was measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT) (Rest, 1993), a multiple-choice measure of stages of moral reasoning comparable to those proposed by Kohlberg. Preference for human values was measured by the Rokeach Value Survey - Form G (RVS) (Rokeach, 1983). Two sets of values (18 terminal values, or desirable end-states of existence, and 18 instrumental values, or desirable ways of being) were rank ordered according to preference by the subjects.

Data analysis. The relationships between level of moral reasoning (as revealed by scores on the DIT) and rank orders of preference for each of the value statements on the RVS were analyzed for the entire group of 66 undergraduate students, as well as for each of several demographically defined subgroups.

For the total sample, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated between the P% scores on the DIT (measure of moral reasoning) and the rank ordered preference scores assigned to *instrumental* and *terminal* value statements on the RVS (measure

of human values). For the total sample, as well as for each of the 16 subsamples or subgroups associated with a demographic classification, both chi square analyses and phi coefficients were calculated to ascertain the degree of relationship between performance on the DIT and the RVS.

Individual scores on the DIT were categorized as being above or below the group mean. In contrast, rank orders of preference for value statements on the RVS were classified according to the way each individual ranked one value relative to the way he or she ranked all other values, instead of comparing the rank assigned by an individual with the group mean ranking of that value. Whenever a subgroup exceeded 20 in number, a value preference level was categorized as being high (rank of 13 to 18), medium (7 to 12), or low (1 to 6). In the instance of groups smaller than 20 the classification of rank orders was dichotomized into high (10 or above) or low (9 or below). In addition, the Fisher Exact Probability Test was applied to the resulting four-fold contingency tables. Phi coefficients from the 3 x 2 contingency tables were obtained after having collapsed two adjacent categories associated with the three groupings of rank orders into one category. (In all statistical analyses, the alpha level was set at 0.05.)

Selected Findings

The following major statistical findings resulted from the analyses of the research data:

1. In the instance of the total sample, the Pearson product moment coefficients between the P% scores earned on the DIT (moral reasoning measure) and the rank order of preference assigned to each of the 18 *terminal* value statements of the RVS (the measure of

human values) varied between -.178 and .239 (all $p > .05$); correspondingly, for the 18 *instrumental* value statements, between -.144 and .105 (all $p > .05$).

2. For the 16 demographically defined subgroups, the frequency of statistically significant indexes of association between categorized scores on the DIT and categorized rank orders of preference assigned to the18 *terminal* and 18 *instrumental* RVS value statements closely approximated what one would expect by chance alone. No consistent patterns of relationship were noted across the total sample and the demographically determined subgroups.

Conclusions

This study of the relationship between the constructs of human values and moral reasoning as components of moral behavior suggested the following conclusions:

1. In the total sample of respondents, the level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT exhibited virtually no relationship to expressed degree of preference for any Rokeach value statement, *terminal* or *instrumental.*

2. In general, little, if any, relationship was evident across the 16 demographically defined subgroups between one's level of moral reasoning and the degree of importance one tended to place on *terminal* or *instrumental* value statements.

3. The overall pattern of findings in the current investigation revealed not only support for the central hypothesis of the study but also a lack of congruence with the patterns of results reported by other investigators.

Recommendations

In line with this research experience, the following recommendations for future research are offered:

1. Any further research on the hypothesized relationship between moral reasoning and human value statements should include a detailed analysis of differences in the patterns of relationships across demographically defined subgroups. This recommendation is motivated by the possibility that any apparent relationships which may be observed are in reality artifacts of demographic influences on value preference.

2. Confidence in the current research findings would be strengthened by a similar study which would include a larger number of subjects, both within the total group and within each of the various demographically defined subgroups.

3. Ultimately, the area of study would benefit from an investigation of moral behavior designed around the four component theory (Narvaez & Rest, 1995) and which would be constructed to test more directly any interactions likely to occur among the four components in the production of a moral act.

APPENDIX A

Rest's Four Component Theory of Moral Behavior

I. Moral Sensitivity:

> ... involves receptivity of the sensory perceptual system to social situations and the interpretation of the situation in terms of what actions are possible, who and what would be affected by each of the possible actions, and how the involved parties might react to possible outcomes.

II. Moral Judgment:

> ... involves deciding which of the possible actions is the most moral. The individual weighs the possible choices and determines what a person ought to do in such a situation.

III. Moral Motivation:

> ... implies that the person gives priority to the moral value above all other values and intends to fulfill it.

IV. Implementation:

> ... combines ego strength with the social and psychological skills necessary to carry out the chosen action. (from Narvaez & Rest, 1995, p. 386).

APPENDIX B

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Reasoning

(Paraphrased by the Investigator)

Level I: Pre-Conventional Morality.

Stage 1: Heteronomous Morality. Perspective is naive moral realism. Right and wrong are determined by authority. Moral significance of an action is an inherent and unchanging quality of an action. Punishment is associated with bad actions, and there is a lack of mediating concepts (e.g., intentionality) and a lack of attention to particulars of circumstance. Differences in individual perspectives are not appreciated.

Stage 2: Individualistic, Instrumental Morality. Individual develops an awareness that persons may have differing, but equally valid, perspectives of a given situation. The right is particular to the situation and the individual perspective. The assumption is that all persons are working to satisfy as many needs and desires as possible, while avoiding negative personal consequences. Judgments are pragmatic; mutual benefit is the goal.

Level II: Conventional Morality

Stage 3: Interpersonally Normative Morality. Social norms are generalized across individuals and situations. These are superior to Stage 1 rules in that they include numerous individual perspectives which have been coordinated into social agreements. Goal is maintaining interpersonal trust and social approval.

Stage 4: Social System Morality: Individual interests are subordinated to the maintenance of a sociomoral system. A social structure consisting of institutions and social roles protects the common good. Conflicts may occur between (even good) occupants, and the system is needed for resolving conflicts. Perspective is either that of a legal/societal system with formalized rules and laws, or that of higher religious or moral law within the individual's conscience. Judgments rely on institutional code.

Level III: Postconventional Morality

Stage 5: Human Rights and Social Welfare Morality: Here the individual is aware of universal values and rights which are prior to and supersede institutional law. Based on rule-utilitarian goal of long-term consequences for individual members of society.

Stage 6: Morality of Universalizable, Reversible, and Prescriptive General Ethical Principle(s): An example of this view is philosopher John Rawls' "original position" of justice in which a choice is made without knowledge of which effected party one is within the group, thus insuring the best and fairest choice from each point of view. All human beings share intrinsic worth, dignity, and equality (Kohlberg, 1984).

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Table 1

Indicators in Various Demographic Subgroups of Only Those Relationships That Were Statistically Significant Between Scores on the DIT (Measure of Moral Reasoning) and Rank Orders of Importance Assigned to Terminal Value Statements from the RVS

Demographic Group and Value Statement	N	χ^2	Phi	p	Fisher's Exact Probability Test	Dominant Cell in Contingency Table
Catholic						
A Comfortable Life	21	7.431	0.595	0.024	-	B, E
Freedom	21	6.496	0.556	0.039	-	E
True Friendship	21	7.289	0.589	0.026	-	B
Protestant						
A Comfortable Life	24	6.436	0.518	0.040	-	E, C
White						
Pleasure	33	6.240	0.435	0.044	-	C
True Friendship	33	9.809	0.545	0.007	-	D
Female						
A Comfortable Life	37	7.680	0.455	0.021	-	E
Inner Harmony	37	6.115	0.407	0.047	-	D
Age 22 and younger						
A Comfortable Life	55	12.663	0.480	0.002	-	E
Freedom	55	9.585	0.417	0.008	-	D

Table 1 (Continued)

Demographic Group and Value Statement	N	χ^2	Phi	p	Fisher's Exact Probability Test	Dominant Cell in Contingency Table
$12,000 and above financial aid						
Freedom	34	6.734	0.445	0.034	-	D
$8,000 and below financial aid						
A Comfortable Life	21	6.077	0.538	0.048	-	E
Father not college graduate						
Freedom	37	10.274	0.527	0.006	-	D
Mother bacalaureate degree or more						
A Comfortable Life	27	7.200	0.516	0.027	-	E
Pleasure	27	8.168	0.550	0.017	-	C
A World at Peace	27	6.435	0.488	0.040	-	A
Mother not college graduate						
Freedom	37	9.847	0.516	0.007	-	E

Note: A = low level moral reasoning/low value statement preference
B = low level moral reasoning/high value statement preference
C = high level moral reasoning/low value statement preference
D = high level moral reasoning/high value statement preference
E = low level moral reasoning/medium value statement preference
F = high level moral reasoning/medium value statement preference

Table 2

Indicators in Various Demographic Subgroups of Only Those Relationships That Were Statistically Significant Between Scores on the DIT (Measure of Moral Reasoning) and Rank Orders of Importance Assigned to Instrumental Value Statements from the RVS

Demographic Group and Value Statement	N	χ^2	Phi	p	Fisher's Exact Probability Test	Dominant Cell in Contingency Table
Catholic						
Capable	21	7.471	0.596	0.024	-	B, C
African-American/Black						
Loving	8	8.000	-1.000	0.005	0.036	B
Female						
Loyal	37	7.695	0.456	0.021	-	F
Age 22 and younger						
Clean	55	6.040	0.331	0.049	-	A, C
$8,000 and below financial aid						
Capable	21	7.469	0.596	0.024	-	C
Helpful	21	7.870	0.612	0.020	-	D
Independent	21	7.891	0.613	0.010	-	B

Table 2 (Continued)

Demographic Group and Value Statement	N	χ^2	Phi	p	Fisher's Exact Probability Test	Dominant Cell in Contingency Table
Father bacalaureate degree or more Capable	29	6.032	0.456	0.049	-	E
Mother bacalaureate degree or more Helpful	27	6.193	0.479	0.045	-	E

Note: A = low level moral reasoning / low value statement preference
B = low level moral reasoning / high value statement preference
C = high level moral reasoning / low value statement preference
D = high level moral reasoning / high value statement preference
E = low level moral reasoning / medium value statement preference
F = high level moral reasoning / medium value statement preference

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